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Coast Trial Casts Light On Intelligence Tactics

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LOS ANGELES, May 7 — Svetlana Ogorodnikov, a Russian woman portrayed by the United States as a Soviet spy and by her courtroom defenders as a troubled naive person, once gave an Federal agent a Russian doll.

That gift at a meeting with the agent occurred in 1982. "I still have it," the now-retired counterintelligence operative, John E. Hunt, has testified. Mr. Hunt, who had been Mrs. Ogorodnikov's case agent in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, is one of the Government's key witnesses at her trial with her husband, Nikolay, also a Soviet émigré, on charges of spying against the security of the United States.

Mr. Hunt also testified that he had kept a photograph of Mrs. Ogorodnikov that she gave him the same year until he turned it over to prosecutors last month, although it has been more than a year since he was last responsible to try to develop her into a double agent for the F.B.I.

Murky World of Espionage

In four days of cross-examination that ended today, Mr. Hunt was questioned about every reported contact he had with Mrs. Ogorodnikov, producing a record not just of their turbulent acquaintance but also of chips of information about how the American and Russian security agencies vie with each other on American soil.

His testimony sketched that struggle as one of trick mirrors and false images, a point made to the jury when a Government prosecutor asserted several times that some of the things Mrs. Ogorodnikov told Mr. Hunt were false intelligence designed to lead the Bureau astray.

The Ogorodnikovs are charged with conspiring in 1984 with another former bureau agent, Richard W. Miller, who will be tried later, to penetrate F.B.I. security and furnish information to the Soviet intelligence services.

The defense used elements such as the doll and the picture to try to keep a personal side to the Hunt-Ogorodnikov meetings in front of the jury.

"You retained the photograph?" Mrs. Ogorodnikov's main defense lawyer, Gregory Stone, asked pointedly. Mr. Hunt affirmed.

Estimate by Former Agent

Mr. Stone has sought to project Mr. Hunt to the jury as a cunning counter-espionage operator who strayed from the straight and narrow to exploit what the lawyer said was the Russian woman's eventual love for him. The defense contends further that the situation forced Mrs. Ogorodnikov into a position to be accused as a spy later after she began seeing Mr. Miller, with whom she had an intimate relationship, according to both sides.

Mr. Hunt testified that he was never her lover. The Government insists that she was never a bona fide informer or double agent for the bureau, only that Mr. Hunt was evaluating her for such a role and dropped her as unreliable.

Mr. Hunt testified that they met 56 times from late in May 1982 and the end of that year when he dropped her.

It was clear that once Mrs. Ogorodnikov told Soviet officials that Mr. Hunt was her F.B.I. agent and boyfriend, both intelligence services searched for ways to exploit the purported situation.

At one point in 1982, Mr. Hunt testified, a Soviet consular official, Boris Belyakov, despairing of being able to manipulate Mr. Hunt through Mrs. Ogorodnikov, suspected that she was being culled for information. "You are a fool" for getting involved with him, Mr. Hunt testified that she said Mr. Belyakov had told her.

Mr. Hunt, moreover, set out some of his own goals in a Teletype message that he sent to bureau headquarters in Washington on Sept. 20, 1982, while he was instructing Mrs. Ogorodnikov what to say when she went to the consulate three days later.

'Unique Opportunity' Seen

"I.A. views this situation as a unique opportunity to view K.G.B. procedures, to initiate an F.B.I. contact," he wrote, "and to initiate a disinformation scenario if later deemed appropriate."

On another occasion in 1982, Mrs. Ogorodnikov told Mr. Hunt that the consul general at San Francisco, Aleksandr Chikvaidze, was a heavy drinker who could not control consulate staff and who told her that he feared being recalled to Moscow for improperly accepting gifts from Russian émigrés here. Mr. Chikvaidze is no longer in the United States.

The prosecutor, Richard Kendall, had earlier told the jury that the Ogorodnikovs were untrained "utility agents."

The prosecutor outlined a series of trips known to the Government by Mrs. Ogorodnikov to the Soviet Union, to the consulate in San Francisco and to the Soviet Embassy in Washington.

After one such trip to the embassy in 1982, he testified, Mrs. Ogorodnikov told him she was questioned for four hours by a Soviet official named Vitaliy Pucalav, who asked "whether she was in contact with an F.B.I. man." Mr. Hunt said. He asked her to furnish information to the embassy. When she refused, she told Mr. Hunt, she was given a signal to alert the embassy in the event she changed her mind: She was to send a letter requesting three visas to the Soviet Union.